TL98-8

East Timor in a state of terror

While President Suharto in Jakarta and Foreign Minister Ali Alatas around the world have been engaged in 'damage limitation' to convince governments that the Santa Cruz massacre was a 'regrettable incident', the situation in East Timor has deteriorated. A reign of terror has eclipsed the occupied island. In particular the role of the hawkish Brig.General Theo Syafei, the new commander in Dili, shows how 'law and order' is now being implemented in East Timor.

Brig.General Theo Syafei has made it a matter of prestige and a personal crusade to maintain 'law and order' in East Timor. Ever since becoming ***KOLAKOPS*** (the special operational command) commander, he has repeatedly made it clear that he will not pursue the soft approach of his predecessor. General Theo, an old Timor hand, has put the clock back to the late seventies and early eighties, when military rule was virtually absolute. The 'opening up' of the last three years is now on the way out; every measure taken by General Theo reinforces this.

The new 'old' approach

Brig.Gen. Theo Syafei was among the invasion troops in December 1975 and has spent nine years on active duty in East Timor. This includes the bloodiest period from 1975 to 1980.

From the moment he was appointed commander in January, General Theo Syafei has made it clear that he is in charge. The press has published one warlike statement after another from the new commander, who makes no secret of his belligerent approach. Here are some examples:

On the Santa Cruz killings:
.....Thus, as I have said, if something similar to the 12 November event were to happen under my leadership, the number of victims would probably be higher. [***Editor***, 14 March 1992]

On running East Timor:
Excerpts from an interview in *Kompas*, 17 March 1992:

Q.: You have served in East Timor for nine years. What are the issues in Timorese society? Why do incidents occur so often?
TS: *The crux of the matter is that in many cases we have not been decisive enough and have lacked consistency. Besides there are still factors which make East Timor unstable. We need to be more consistent.*

Q: It seems that every time a foreign official pays a visit, demonstrations occur. Can you explain that?
TS: *We have to remember: East Timor belongs to us. Why do we have to receive all those foreign officials? Someone who has donated a 4km water-pipe is received with more honours than our own Inspector-General. Their kind of aid is not comparable to the efforts poured in by our Republic.*
Q: Why then do demonstrations still occur?
TS: *It's like this. We thought that by showing love to the people, it would work both ways, but it didn't turn out like that on that day.* [the day of Santa Cruz bloodbath, TAPOL] *Our love was taken as being a sign of indecision and weakness. In the villages our programme functions wells and is accepted. But in the city where things have been 'polluted', it was interpreted as indecision, an attitude of wait-and-see. Moreover, there is fertile soil for agitation and propaganda with an estimated 8,000 people unemployed in Dili.*

Q: About people's attitudes, what happens if they adopt an anti-Indonesia stance?
TS: *That is impossible. This is the territory of the Republic of Indonesia.*

Q: So what attitude will ABRI (the armed forces) take?
TS: *I'll say to my troops: win over the people. The people are obliged to follow. If not, please flee*

to the bush. Conditions in Dili must be made not ***favourable*** *[original English] for them. If they use public transport, they have to feel this is not a Fretilin bus. The cinema is not a Fretilin owned cinema. We will create such a situation.*

Q: If they flee to the bush, then what?
TS: *Please, please let them go to the bush. If they go to the bush, they become GPK [security disruptor gangs].*

Q: In the post 12 November period, it seems the security approach has been stepped up?
TS: *I'm only restoring ABRI standards. Demonstrations don't exist according to Indonesian law.*

Tough words backed by tough measures

Syafei's tough language has been backed by tough measures. East Timor, a little more relaxed in the period of 'opening up', has now moved in the opposite direction, comparable to the early years after the invasion.

Neither the visit of Amos Wako, the special UN envoy, nor the high-profile journey of the Peace Mission by the ***Lusitania Expresso*** led to demonstrations in Dili. The reason is clear: General Theo Syafei left nothing to chance in his determination to forestall any disturbance. By using massive force and a huge military presence, he 'passed the test with flying colours'. From crack of dawn on the day of Wako's arrival, row upon row of troops were spread across the fields and in between the trees surrounding Comoro airport. The troops were stationed there from five in the morning and remained in place even in during a heavy downpour, to await the arrival of Wako. During Wako's brief visit, General Syafei personally inspected the town throughout the day. In the afternoon, drenched by the rain, he watched a local football match between two kampungs, to make sure it was only a football match. He spent the night in the room next to Wako's in Hotel Mahkota.

Combat readiness for the Peace Boat

The measures taken to meet the ***Lusitania Expresso*** were even more ferocious. General Theo created a special task force *[Satgasus, Satuan Tugas Chusus]* of 1500 people which was kept in a state of combat readiness for all eventualities. Things were placed on a war footing so as to enhance the dominant role of the military. Weeks before the ***Lusitania Expresso*** was anywhere near the waters of Timor, Syafei started arresting people in Dili, including the village-head of Santa Cruz, Jacobus dos Santos, who was accused of preparing a welcome for the Peace Mission.

The Peace Mission was portrayed by *ABRI* as a political provocation. Several layers of 'defence' were set up. The first was the outer cordon in the Timor waters, consisting of a destroyer, corvettes, frigates and landing craft backed up by planes and helicopters. In case some passengers managed to get ashore, a second line of defence was formed. The six police subdistricts from Liquica, west of Dili, to Viqueque on the south coast, were charged with taking care of the 'unwanted guests'. The infamous *pagar betis* method was employed, a 'fence of legs' of people stretching along the coast for more than three hundred miles from Liquica to Viqueque, to stop the aliens from landing. In case the second line of defence proved unable to prevent foreigners from entering Dili, there was another line consisting of military and police forces, who were combat-ready to receive them in Dili.

Meanwhile, people in Dili were prevented from going to the beaches to look out for the boat. Anti-riot units were on patrol in Dili from mid-February, creating an atmosphere of fear and tension.

Theo Syafei's overhaul

In the brief period since becoming *Kolakops* commander, Syafei has conducted a major overhaul of the structure. Although continuing the territorial operation of the two former commanders, Sintong Panjaitan and Rudy Warouw, the thrust of *Operasi Morris Diak* [Operation Good Life] under Theo Syafei has taken a different direction. Previously, the hearts-and-minds strategy of *Morris Diak* was implemented partly through persuasion. Theo Syafei is now openly critical of his predecessor. Asked how his strategy differed from Brig.Gen. Warouw's, he said:

The position and policy of ABRI never change. Our mission is to bring stability in East Timor. In a technical sense our approaches are different. Pak Warouw had his love and caring approach. But as I see it, because of a different culture, his approach came to be seen as indecision. Some regard the soft approach as a weakness. I only want to stress the importance of restoring ABRI's credibility and to make sure that softness is by no means weakness. This is the position I want to put across. And indeed, this position has been accepted by many. [Suara Pembaruan, 4.III.92]

Syafei's approach is fully backed by *ABRI* headquarters in Jakarta. For Dili alone the *Morris Diak* territorial operation has been allotted 2.3 billion rupiahs (more than one million US dollars). This amounts to 88 million rupiahs for each of the 26 neighbourhoods in Dili. The objective is to drive the 'anti-integrationists' into an impossible position. A special territorial battalion, Battalion 'Red Bear'/641 from West Kalimantan, has been assigned for the job in Dili. It will stay for one year, with units in every one of the 26 neighbourhoods. The former scheme of classifying villages as green [relatively safe], orange [so-so] and red [security-threatening] zones still applies. On average, 30 soldiers have been stationed in each neighbourhood in addition to the existing structures of military subdistrict, police subdistrict and para-military forces. As Timorese in Dili whisper: *"Before, they were everywhere in the streets, now they have entered our bedrooms."*

Under Warouw, there was still a grey area of people not openly expressing anti-integration feelings. But Theo Syafei will only tolerate people being 'with us or against us'. There can be no 'floating mass', People must either accept Indonesian domination or join the guerrillas. In El Salvador and the Philippines, the hearts-and-minds strategy came to be known as **low intensity conflict**, this term has not been applied to Indonesia's military strategy in East Timor. General Theo Syafei's strategy resembles this type of conflict, so it is now possible to speak about a low intensity conflict in East Timor. All the ingredients are there: separating the guerrillas from the population, focusing on control of the population, combining military duties with civic duties and using all kinds of intelligence operations.

Streamlining intelligence

The use of intelligence has always been excessive in East Timor. Each wing, the air force, the navy, the police and the army, have their own intelligence. In the army *KOLAKOPS* had its own intelligence unit, the territorial commands from *Korem, Kodim* down to *Koramil*, the military sub-district command, all had their own intelligence. Moreover there was a combined, intelligence task force 86, a special intelligence unit for sector C (Dili) and each battalion also had its own intelligence. The two national intelligence agencies *BAKIN* and *BAIS* were also represented in East Timor. On top of that, the prosecution service had its own intelligence unit. In the last few years, the different intelligence units have competed with each other. As a result of using Timorese informers, quality fell because of misinformation and half-truths. Special intelligence units consisting of East Timorese were established, *Satgas Elang* [Hawk Task Force] and the *Railakan* unit.

Syafei soon recognised that the situation was chaotic. The military now admit that intelligence units often overacted. The 28 October incident at Motael church, the prologue of the 12 November tragedy, is cited as an example of this, when fighting took place between *Satgas Elang* personnel and Timorese youth and two people died, including Sebastiao Gomes. Syafei has decided to disband the different intelligence units and establish a coordinating body to centralise everything.

Nobody talks about 'opening up' East Timor any more; the slender margins of the last three years have disappeared. It is back to the grim reality of absolute military rule in East Timor. Brig.-General Theo Syafei, the archetype of a hardliner, clearly enjoys his new job. He wants to be known as a tough guy and his reign of terror is rampaging all over East Timor.

Terror confirmed by visitors

People who have visited East Timor since Santa Cruz, confirm that brutality is a daily occurrence, with an atmosphere of fear and the military displaying their arrogance. The US journalist Peter Goodman, a freelancer based in Jakarta, visited East Timor in February and was told to leave because he did not possess a travel permit. He went to East Timor for the visit of Amos Wako and had told the authorities of his journalistic intentions. He has given a graphic account of the situation in Dili:

Dili is dominated by fear, the streets devoid of activity throughout much of the day. On one recent morning, virtually everyone had a quick look about to see who else might be in the area before

saying so much as good morning to a foreigner.

At least 10,000 Indonesian troops remain in East Timor and Dili has the air of a city under siege.

On a steamy morning earlier this month, 500 soldiers in 20 lorries stood in formation in a field in central Dili. All carried full packs and M16 assault rifles slung over their shoulders. Their commander addressed them loudly while
he stood beneath a flagpole, the red-and-white of Indonesia liftèd by a gentle breeze. Most East Timorese walking by did not even dare look.

While none of the dozen or so soldiers at ease on the sides of the field cared to say where the men were going, several East Timorese said troops have been entering villages frequently of late.

"They go from house to house, warning people not to make trouble," said an elderly East Timorese as he sat beneath an enormous banyan tree on the edge of the crumbling broadwalk that fronts the harbour. "The soldiers come and beat people up. Many are taken away for questioning and often disappear. The military has killed many in the last few months." [*Daily Telegraph*, 28.II.1992]

Reports by Indonesian journalists confirm Goodman's description, although their accounts, for obvious reasons, are more indirect. The reporting in the Indonesian press about the implementation of Syafei's policies is revealing enough to describe the atmosphere of terror in East Timor.

Another foreigner who was recently banned from Indonesia is Sidney Jones, the Executive Director of Asia Watch, the US-based human rights organisation. She visited East Timor in February as a tourist and spent four days there. From the moment she and her colleague arrived in Dili, they were photographed and followed. The surveillance ended only when they left Jakarta airport. Sidney Jones is an experienced East Timor researcher and her testimony is worth quoting:

I was skeptical of accounts of post-massacre killings before going to East Timor. I am much more inclined to believe them now. In a place where the only checks on the military are a relatively powerless governor and a beleaguered Catholic church, where fear prevented many witnesses from giving testimony to the National Commission of Inquiry and still prevents ordinary conversations on the street, I began to understand why we weren't getting proof. [Testimony by Asia Watch before the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 27.II.1992].

Life in East Timor under Indonesian occupation has always been wretched but under the hawkish Brig.Gen. Theo Syafei, the situation is ten times worse.

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